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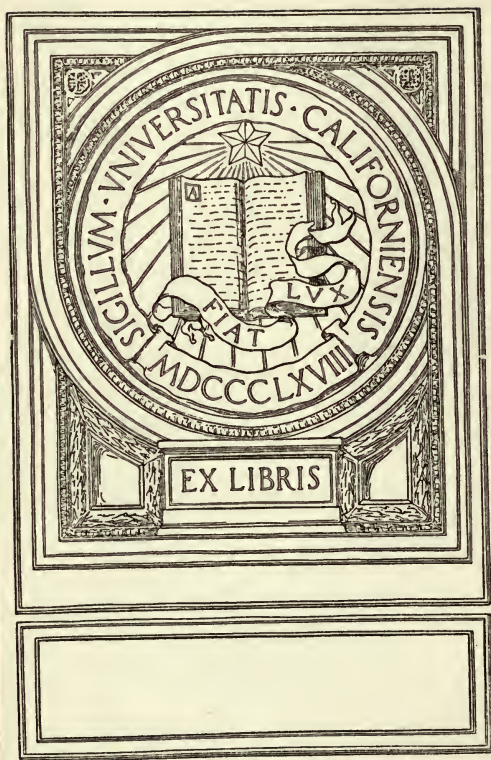


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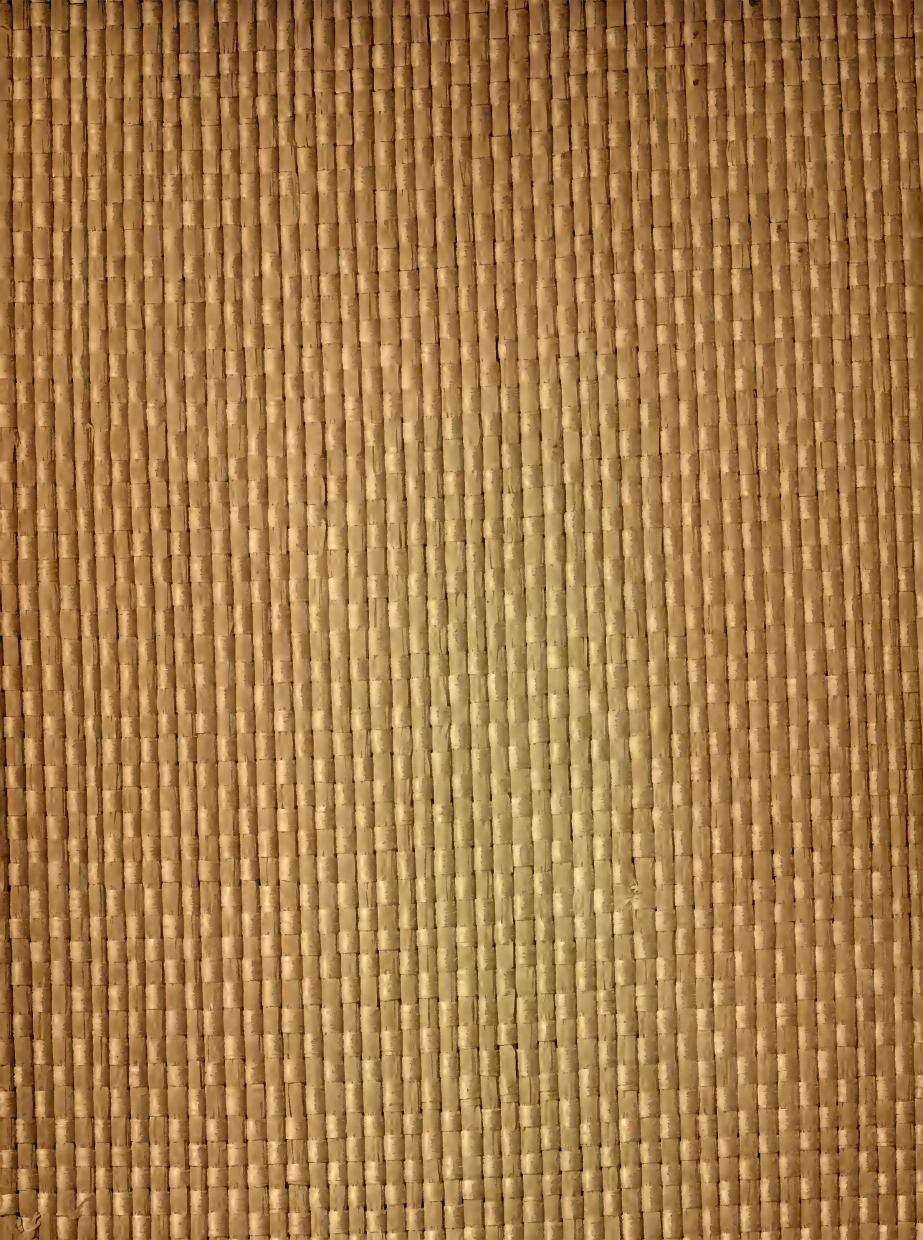


1859
MAIN

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Washed Soul







Mother-Soul

...by...

Laura M. Smith [Greer]

[S.F. 1277]

EVERY STITCH IS A BENEDICTION.

I see the curved cheek of a Woman.
I see that her head is bent —
Bent low over a small white piece of cloth.

My soul stands aside.

The needle plies in and out; she is alone in the room.
She is thinking of something; she has a secret.
The smile in her eyes is hidden — but *I* know; —
The slow sweep of her bosom proclaims her;
The light in her face proclaims her;
The thing in her lap proclaims her.

It is a baby-yoke.
The woman is sacred — removed — apart.
She does not need us.

THE LITTLE OUTFIT.

Oh, the world is glad and bonny,
Oh, the world is coming on !

I hear the pull of the thread through the cloth !
I see the sewing pinned to the knee !
I hear the double-quick of the heart !

(China, Peru, Vermont, Malay—

There is something going on in the land—something discreet,
designed !)

Lay your ear to the world; do you not hear the mother-pulse
beating, beating—

With strong and steady pulsations beating under the world?

Do you not see the women—the women—with bent heads hiding
the glow in the cheek—

Do you not see the pricked fingers and the prayer in the heart?

Lay your ear to the world—



A baby's smile is like a flash of light on summer seas.
A baby's smile is like a star in a rift between two clouds.
A baby's smile is like a rainbow in an April storm.
A baby's smile leaps up and up and out the starry eyes
like joy-beams on a mountain lake at morning !

A baby is a little mighty interrogation point, bulging
with grown-up traits, tapering to pink and white,
and ending in a dimple !

And, oh, a baby's neck !
The snares within a baby's neck !
The kisses hidden there !
The delicate lines !
The sturdy fullness at the back —

And all the sweet seductive white and warmth
and softness of a baby's neck !

The almost gold, the almost silk of the
fine woven threads from out the
loom of God on that dear baby
head !

Oh, light and shadow through a trellis-work of vines —
Oh, dancing golden sunshine lacing in and out with
trembling shadow-leaves !

Oh, light and shadow in the temple-corner of my baby's eye
Oh, softer shadow lying just beneath the brow —
Oh, deeper, darker shadow in the half-veiled eyes —

Oh, burnished lashes ! where the sun breaks through
and showers

Golden light in slender bars through that sweet sombrelan

A pitch pine-knot, split, in the center of it,
has the breath of God.

There is another thing which is as pure as that;—
It hovers round a wholesome baby's mouth !



DEEP IN THE HEART.

Oh, mother, mother, where is the little box with the cord around it?
Is it in your bureau drawer?
The little box, dear, with the sacred lock of baby-hair in it.

Oh mother, mother!

Never mind —

There ! there ! little woman —

I know —

But I saw a blue patch in the sky to-day !

NONE.

Are your arms empty, mother-heart?
Do they hang by your side?

Oh, thou great hungering desert!
Oh, thou Craving! thou Great Unsatisfied!
Oh, thou! thou! I see thee—great, great, woman-nature,
Eating of restlessness; drinking of barrenness;
Turning aside still; with wide eyes in the night asking.

Thy breast is shrunken and brown;
Thy arms hang limp at thy side;
And ever, ever thou art filling thy life to the brim
To stop the gnawing at thy vitals!

Oh, my mother-heart!
Knowest thou not that in thy divine and inexpressible longing thou
 art mothering the sons of men?
Knowest thou not that in thy empty pain thou sittest brooding over
 the world—
Brooding *child-love* over the world?

MADONNA.

In the little low arm-chair
One arm a world for the tiny form
Dreaming and resting, the mother.

Dreaming and nursing, the mother;
The eyes of the babe half-shut in blissful endeavor;
The moist white breast, blue-veined, in generous giving;
The tiny palm hungrily pressing its bounty
And the warm red mouth and the drinking!

Dreaming and resting, the mother.
Withdrawing awhile from the clamor.
Sitting awhile in the sunshine.
Time of the peace and the heart's-ease;
Time of the light and the vision;
Time of the moving of angels
About the chair of the mother.

TINTED PETAL OF A FLOWER.

I awoke one night.

Just a sweet half-waking, with dreams and dreams—

And something lay upon my breast!

It was light, light as the silk floss of a “four-o’clock.”

It was warm, warm as a bird’s breast is, down in the hot feathers of it.

It was soft, soft as the sheeny satin of a crimson rose-leaf—

And I was wondering.

I gently reached and touched it (I was but lately born a mother)—

It was my baby’s hand!

And forever and forever there remains upon my breast a little spot,
a shrine, where angels go to pray.

Oh, the dimples and the hollows and the
 silken grooves and shadows.
And the kisses and the curves,
And the sweet voluptuous softness—
That lie about a baby's mouth and chin !

ow,

THE OUTER CORNER OF A BABY'S EYE.

That little place where light and shadow play !

That little haunt where fleeting fairies wave and weave !

That nestling-nest ! that sweet seductive little vortex,
half a dimple, half a smile

That whirls a mother's heart around in its embrace !

The little arms that leave my passionate finger marks
upon them
Like apple-blossoms softly tinged with pink.

The round little legs, so pretty and so daintily shaped !
dear, *dear* little round firm legs — I could squeeze
them till they burst !

The little, mighty thighs !
The absurdly powerful little thighs —
That think they bulge with manly deeds
and mighty conquerings !

I awoke one
Just a sweet
And someth

It was ligh
It was warm
It was soft,
And I was w
I gently reac
It was my ba

And forever
a shr



GONE.

I stand apart —
I approach not —
My head is bowed —

The faint strange perfume in the room.
The tiny, tiny blossom in the long white baby clothes.
The silken petals of the casket enfolding.
And the pallor !

In an upper chamber a woman rests heavily on the pillow,
The blue veins show in her wrist.
She is not weeping — she is just tired, tired, —
Her Soul is away for a little while.

A man, alone, looks out over a new grave.
His eyes are wide and very still.
His cheek bones show.
And oh, — *the void ! the void ! the void !*

I ONLY KNOW THAT IT IS WELL.

What was it hurt thee, dear?

Did the world seem to shudder? Did the hooks fasten in thy heart?

What was it hurt thee when the first clod hit the little coffin—

Oh God! the vinegar rises in my throat—

But there — —

But there — —

It is all right.

It is not a strange world, dear.

OH, INEXPRESSIBLE !

Oh, to lay hold of one packed jewel that would express my baby's foot !

Oh, to find one ravishing flower that would shake fragrance through my words !

Oh, to gather together the hot ideal of the artist, the pure dream of the sculptor, the passion of the poet

And mould them in with rose-leaves, tints, and curves, and delicate lines !

Oh, to *shower* down gems from out the upper platforms with which to stud the dainty, tender, rosy, rounded things !

And after all I cannot do it.

After all the passionate mother-names that I have heaped upon them,
After all the passionate kisses (*mother's know*) that I have pressed
in to the rosy soles,

After all the savage pressure of the little balls within my hand — I
cannot do it.

I only sit and burn straight things like these:

Oh, the soft rose-tide on the outer side

That wells up from beneath to meet the white !

Oh, luscious rounded part so plump and ravishing between the instep
and the toes !

Oh, snowy little ankle and fragile ankle-bones !

Oh, radiance of the ball, when the Pink Great Toe points daintily
heavenward

And the four brides lift rosy faces with him !

Oh, sharp-cut, fine-cut, delicate little heel — a rosebud with a soul !

Oh, the long line at the base of the toes, the line at the ankle, the
delicate little lines in the hollow of the foot !

Oh, dainty movements, curves on curves, oh tints, oh petals of a
flower — !

Oh, baby feet the whole world round

Leaving their fragrance in the hearts of women !

INSPIRATION.

The mares in the field.
Cool, quiet, unashamed.
Before the passing patter of the world
Proclaiming the high and holy beauty of their calling.
With curved sides pushing against the days;
With massive backs,
And hips submerged and lost in the slow-creeping tide of mother-
hood.

Beautiful, ponderous, patient mothers in the field !
Thick as flowers in the fields of Palo Alto.
Long, long I hang on the fence and watch you.
I love your magnificent sides, great, grand mother-mares.
I love you — I whisper it through the fence—
And passing, with my eyes, I love you !

WORSHIPED.

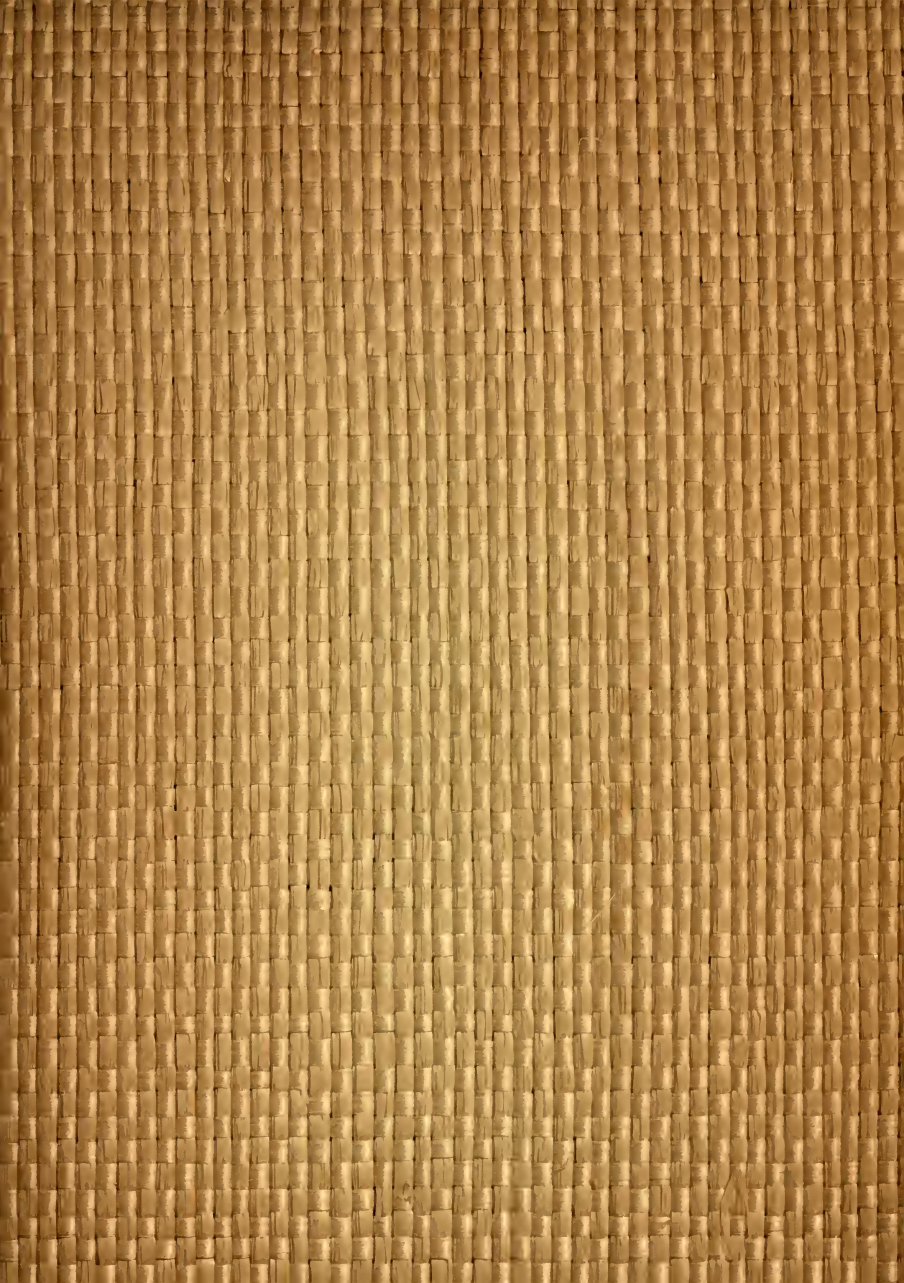
Great ponderous dome of Womanhood !
Thou glorious, golden-weighted ship of Life
Slow-moving through the heavy seas in mother-majesty —
Sail on !
Sail on !
What though thy breath be bitten off !
What though thy heart beat thready double-time
And leaden limbs refuse thee and deny thee !
Be glad, brave mother !
Thou 'rt set full sail with white-winged ships of God
And thou wilt enter port at sunset
Side by side with Him.

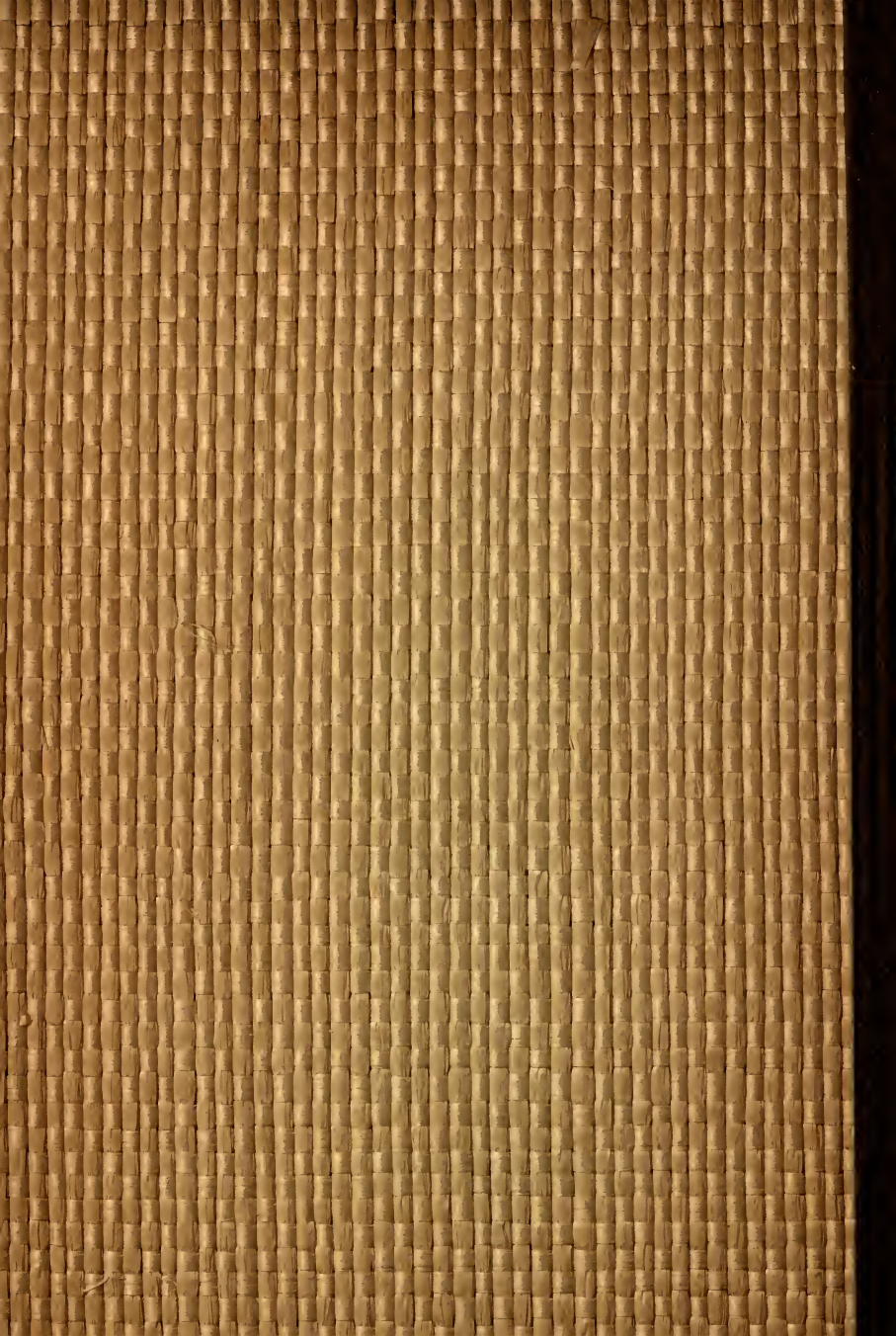
Do you see that white light playing low along the horizon?
Do you see the night padding in, blacker, blacker
Save for that narrow strip of sulphurous light
Lying low along the horizon?
Silent, ominous—
Like a long white finger of God?

There is a white light like that playing along my life.
It lies low, under the skirts of its slumber and sleep;
And it burns — it burns. Quietly — —
With a steady and ominous force,
And it *is* the finger of God !

Not farewell, but bide a wee.
You will hear from me again.







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